

# BUDDY BENTLEY



AN ORIGINAL PLAY OF  
MURDER AND INSANITY  
IN HOLLYWOOD BY  
MAX SPARBER

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# Buddy Bentley

## An Original Play by Max Sparber

### Act One, Scene One.

*(The curtain rises on the interior of a rather lavish living room of a small townhouse in Beverly Hills. The room exists on two levels, with two or three steps leading up to the higher level. The lower of the two levels is a perfectly functional, if sumptuously designed, with a sofa, several chairs, a console television set, and a bar.*

*The higher level, on the other hand, is set up something like a shrine, all carefully arranged around a white grand piano. The walls are covered with posters from movies, lobby cars, framed letters, and other Hollywood brick-a-brac, all dedicated to a child star, Buddy Bentley. In a carefully lit glass case is a number of trophies and awards, as well as a pair of bronzed shoes, several record albums by Buddy, and a number of children's toys all emblazoned with Buddy's image, such as pop guns and cowboy hats.*

*Seated on the sofa is a REPORTER named RUDY STANG. RUDY dresses much as we might expect a reporter to, circa 1964. He wears an ill-fitting gray two-piece suit with a thin tie, and he glances through a small notebook. He looks around the room, rises, crosses up the stairs to the piano, glances through the sheet music. Then he turns to look at the shrine.*

*CHARLES BENTLEY enters stage right. Bentley is a man past his prime, about 55 years old, dressed dapperly but rather foppishly in a silk smoking jacket, crème colored slacks, and a silk scarf wrapped around his neck and tucked under the collar of his shirt. He carries with him the atmosphere of faded elegance, and he moves delicately, nursing a scotch in one hand and a cigarette in the other. The cigarette is smoked European-styled, from a decorative filter. Charles will not be seen in this play without the cigarette. He watches Stang for a moment, then clears his throat.)*

CHARLES: You've found the shrine, I see.

STANG: Well, I could hardly miss it, Mr. Bentley. You were gone for a while. Are you feeling better?

CHARLES: Call me Charles. It's my prescriptions. Sometimes they make me quite nauseated. But I have pills for the nausea. My brother has an impressive collection of awards, don't you think?

STANG: Yes. Where do you keep your awards, Mr. Bentley?

CHARLES: Charles. I have a little shelf of them in my bedroom. But I was never a star like Buddy. I don't have quite so many trophies as brother Buddy, and do not feel the need to show them in so grand a manner.

STANG: You've won your share, Mr. Bentley. Charles.

- CHARLES: True. But not like Buddy. Do you know he doesn't even keep his most impressive award in the case?
- STANG: What award is that?
- CHARLES: Why, his Purple Heart, of course. He's still got a bullet in his chest from World War Two. He was at the battle of Iwo Jima, don't you know?
- STANG: You would think he would put that in the trophy case with all the others. In a place of honor.
- CHARLES: Well, it's not a show business award, so Buddy keeps it separate. He keeps it in his closet, along with his uniform. But if you get him a little drunk, Buddy might just put his old uniform on and show you the medal.
- STANG: I'm not here to write about Buddy.
- CHARLES: Yes. Puzzling.
- STANG: Well, there's been a great revival of interest in your work, Mr. Bentley.
- CHARLES: So you tell me. I don't know how to answer that. I am no longer accustomed to talking about myself. I've spent an awfully long time talking about Buddy. Mostly *to* Buddy. My brother is his own favorite subject, don't you know? And do try to remember to call me Charles, my dear man.
- STANG: Yes. Well, with the Broadway revival of *Destiny of Fools*, I expect you will be talking about yourself quite a bit more, Charles, and about Buddy quite a bit less.
- CHARLES: I don't know that I shall be able to handle it. It is so rare that I talk to anybody but my brother nowadays. This is all a bit much for me. *Destiny of Fools* was not well received when it first played, you know. The critics said that I was like a cynical, effete Noel Coward. That stung me. I could handle being called cynical, but I was not sure what they meant when they said I was more effete than Coward. It just seemed cruel.
- STANG: Well, I am sure that much of the revived interest in your play comes from your work in Hollywood.
- CHARLES: I suppose you are right. Pen a script or two for Lubitsch or DeMille and the world will never completely leave you alone. Quite a few people are under the misapprehension that I wrote the orgy scene in *The Ten Commandments*. Imagine! Me! I would not even have known how to begin such a thing!
- STANG: Well, you were quite a character in Hollywood for a while as well, Charles. People still speak of your appearances on the Jack Paar show, and that panel show you were on.

CHARLES: *Have I Got an Answer for You!* People remember because I talked endlessly about my visits to sanatoriums. I was so nervous; all I could do was babble on about my ragged psyche. I don't know how I got the courage to do even that. It has always been such an effort for me to just go out my front door.

STANG: This is because of agoraphobia, yes?

CHARLES: Yes. I seem to be as famous for my agoraphobia as for anything else in my life. There was a time when a fascinating neurosis made a fella quite popular. It was associated with genius, don't you know. So sometimes when I was outside, if I felt myself experiencing vertigo or feeling faint, I would simply fall into the arms of anyone nearby and cry out, "I am Charles Bentley, and I am having a panic attack!" And they would help me to my feet, and then stand around and applaud. I think it is why they gave me the Oscar. They were hoping I would collapse and start screaming during the ceremony, and wouldn't they have been impressed if I had?

STANG: But you didn't.

CHARLES: No. It's probably why they only gave me the one. Buddy, in the meanwhile, has three. A record for a child actor. Although I would like to flatter myself that I had a hand in one of them. The first.

STANG: Really? How so?

CHARLES: I penned three of the songs for *Prince Buddy*. I was writing songs for the senior revues at Harvard when Buddy was having his career as a child star — I'm ten years older than my brother, you know — and his producer heard a few of them and liked them. It was my first credit in a Hollywood film.

STANG: Do you remember the songs?

CHARLES: Oh, of course! There is not a Buddy Bentley song I can't play on command.

STANG: I would like to hear one, if you wouldn't mind.

CHARLES: Would you? I could play you one, if you like. Of course, I don't have Buddy's singing voice. (*He sits at the piano.*) Did you ever see *Prince Buddy*?

STANG: Jeez, I must have. It seems like I saw all of those Buddy Bentley films when I was a kid. What was it about?

CHARLES: Oh, the usual. Buddy is kidnapped by anarchists and flown to Bavaria, where he is held hostage. It turns out he is the last heir to the Bavarian throne, and he didn't even know it! This song comes at the end, when Buddy is crowned Prince of Bavaria, and he sings it to his subjects, and they sing back to him: (*Playing the piano and singing in a high, thin voice, in a melancholy manner.*)

What is this scepter in my hand?  
 What is this crown upon my brow?  
 These people kneel and call me prince  
 They kiss my ring then deeply bow  
 What a change in just an hour!  
 By this time I would have thought me dead  
 Sixty minutes with a knife at your back  
 And an hour later, a crown on your head.  
*(Speaking)* And this is what the Bavarians sing back to Buddy:  
*(Now upbeat)*  
 Well, if you gotta have a prince  
 And you gotta have a prince, don't you?  
 Why not make Buddy Bentley your Prince?  
 Make Buddy your prince, won't you?  
 Strike up the band, strike up the band,  
 Strike up the band for Prince Buddy!  
 Strike up the band, strike up the band,  
 Strike up the band, please do!  
 Give us a hand, strike up the band,  
 Let all the land sing:  
*Buddy Buddy*  
*Buddy Bentley how we love you!*

*(Buddy Bentley enters, unnoticed. He is a tall, muscular man in his mid-40s, slightly overweight, wearing slacks and a dinner jacket. He pauses at the door to listen to Charles sing, taking off his jacket, revealing a short-sleeve shirt sprouting thick upper arms with tattoos.)*

**CHARLES:** *(Speaking.)* And Buddy sings back to them: *(Singing.)*  
 I was an orphan in Chicago  
 Shining boots and tramping around  
 I lived in railyards for ages  
 I made my bed on the Chicago ground.  
*(Whispering to Stang.)* A little melodramatic, but people liked it when Buddy  
 played a kid from the streets. *(Singing.)*  
 In all my life I ain't seen a dollar  
 In all my life I ain't made a dime  
 I once had two nickels to rub together  
*(Whispering.)* And now the king of Bavaria hands Buddy two coins and sings:  
*(Singing.)*  
 Here's two nickels, rub them anytime!  
*(Speaking grandly.)* And all the Bavarians sing: *(Singing.)*  
 Well, if you gotta have a prince  
 And you gotta have a prince, don't you?  
 Why not make Buddy Bentley your Prince?  
 Make Buddy your prince, won't you?  
 Strike up the band, strike up the band,

Strike up the band for Prince Buddy!  
Strike up the band, strike up the band,  
Strike up the band, please do!  
Give us a hand, strike up the band,  
Let all the land sing:  
*Buddy Buddy*  
*Buddy Bentley how we love you!*

BUDDY: (*Applauding.*) *Prince Buddy*. Well sung, Charlie. You telling the story of how you won me the Oscar?

CHARLES: (*Startled, then abruptly.*) No. You won the Oscar, Buddy. I scribbled a few songs.

BUDDY: No? You ain't telling your friend how *Prince Buddy* won me my first Academy Award, and it was also my first musical? You ain't telling the story of how the *New York Times* praised the music?

CHARLES: No, Buddy.

BUDDY: Jeez louise, Charlie. Take some pride in your work. After *Prince Buddy*, I could do no wrong. One musical after another, all hits. Isn't it fair that my brother gets some credit for that?

CHARLES: Now, Buddy. You deserve all the accolades you received.

BUDDY: Sez you. But what is a Buddy Bentley movie without all those great songs?  
(*Looking at Stang.*) Say, you ain't introduced me to your friend, Charlie.

CHARLES: This is Rudy Stang from *Weekly Variety*. He's doing a story about *Destiny of Fools*.

BUDDY: (*Vigorously shaking the reporter's hand.*) A pleasure, Rudy. You're writing a story about Charlie, are you?

STANG: Yes, Mr. Bentley.

BUDDY: Aw, call my Buddy, why don't ya? You know, when we was approached about a new production of *Destiny of Fools*, we wasn't sure we wanted to do it.

STANG: No?

BUDDY: No. In fact, this production is being done over my objections.

STANG: Really?

CHARLES: Buddy remembers how the critics reacted to it the first time it played.



BUDDY: They were awful. Why put Charlie through that again? You know, it was right after *Destiny of Fools* that Charlie had his first breakdown.

CHARLES: Buddy.

BUDDY: Aw, you're not embarrassed about this, are you, Charlie? You used to talk about it on the radio all the time. (*To Stang.*) He was institutionalized for two months. You can understand that I'm a little protective of my brother.

STANG: Yes, I can understand.

BUDDY: And it's not like we need the money. So I figured, why subject Charlie to more ridicule? The press was never very nice to my brother.

CHARLES: That's true. They were often very mean about me.

BUDDY: Oh, they wrote some awful stories about him, the tabloids. Always getting into his business. So usually I don't allow reporters to talk to Charlie nowadays. Not at all.

STANG: Well, I appreciate the opportunity to talk to him.

BUDDY: I didn't allow this interview, either. I didn't even know about it. Did I, Charlie?

CHARLES: No. I agreed to the interview. The magazine called me a few days ago. I suppose I forgot to mention it.

BUDDY: Sometimes Buddy likes to surprise me like that. Say, Mr. Stang, you're not drinking!

STANG: No. I usually don't drink when I conduct an interview.

BUDDY: Oh, that won't do! If Charlie and I are drinking, I insist you join us!

STANG: Really, I never do.

BUDDY: Well, tonight you will. Scotch? A martini. I'll mix you up anything you want.

STANG: Mr. Bentley.

BUDDY: Call me Buddy. And I'm going to insist on this.

STANG: All right, then, since you insist. A rum and coke.

BUDDY: Some lime in it? Make it into a Cuba Libre?

STANG: Fine, yes. With lime.



- BUDDY: *(Crossing to the bar to fix the drink.)* I used to love Cuba, back when I was a boy. You know, I made a film there. What was it called?
- CHARLES: *Streets of Havana.*
- BUDDY: *Streets of Havana*, yes. I was little when I made that film, before they started putting my name in the titles. I thought Cuba was a fine old place, I really did. There was music in that picture, but it wasn't a musical. I didn't sing in it either. It wasn't even a Buddy Bentley film, really, I was just one of the supporting characters. But we loved Cuba, didn't we, Charlie?
- CHARLES: Cuba was beautiful. I was sixteen, and we visited with the whole family.
- BUDDY: *(Handing Stang his drink.)* Didn't you have a run in with the law when we was in Cuba, Charlie?
- CHARLES: Yes. Silly, really. I was at a party with some of the local boys and it got a bit raucous. I wasn't much of a drinker then, and by the time the police arrived I was too drunk to do much about it. They put me in a cell and let me sleep it off. The parents were furious.
- BUDDY: It's a good thing you wasn't famous then, Charlie. Wouldn't the press have made hay with that story! *(Raising his glass.)* Let's say a toast! To the press, may they all rot in hell forever. *(Laughing, to Stang.)* I'm just teasing, Mr. Stang. I'm sure that you don't mean to run my brother's name through the mud.
- STANG: If course not, Mr. Bentley.
- BUDDY: Buddy, Mr. Stang.
- STANG: Buddy. Of course not. We're just doing a short profile of him, now that his play has attracted so much interest,
- BUDDY: What do you mean by a profile?
- STANG: You know, the usual. Hollywood screenwriter, once a popular wit on radio and television. Disappears for a while, but suddenly there's new interest in his work. The magazine wants me to write about what he's been doing for the past decade.
- BUDDY: I see. Well, you ain't been doing much, have you, Charlie?
- CHARLES: Not much, no.
- BUDDY: Certainly nothing worth writing about. Right, Charlie?
- CHARLES: Not more than a few paragraphs.

BUDDY: If that. Charlie just kind of sits at home all day with his reel-to-reel recordings, and I take care of him.

STANG: Reel-to-reel tape recordings?

BUDDY: Sure. He's got recordings from his radio panel show, *Have I got an Answer for You!* Charlie likes to listen to them.

CHARLES: I'll play you some later, if you like, Mr. Stang.

STANG: I would like that. (*To Buddy.*) And you take care of him, you say?

BUDDY: Sure. Charlie needs somebody to look out for him. I look after his business interests, get his prescriptions, keep him company. That sort of thing.

STANG: Well, maybe there's a story there.

CHARLES: Oh, what do you mean, Mr. Stang?

STANG: You know. A day in the life of the Bentley brothers.

BUDDY: You think there's something there, Mr. Stang?

STANG: Sure, if I spent a little time on it. You'd be surprised what turns up if you just take the time to look.

BUDDY: I suppose you're right Mr. Stang.

STANG: As I see it, this way we get the best of both worlds. Not only do we tell the story of Charles Bentley, but also of Buddy, the former child-star and three-time Academy Award winner.

CHARLES: And war hero.

STANG: And war hero. People are going to want to know what you two do with your lives.

BUDDY: Gosh, Mr. Stang. There may be something to that.

CHARLES: You see, Buddy?

STANG: Sure there is. Heck, if I talk to my editor, I could probably get more room in the magazine for this story. We could even make a feature out of it, and I could spend a little more time with the two of you, researching the story.

BUDDY: Is that a fact?

STANG: Well, only if you agree to the story, Mr. Bentley.

BUDDY: I can give you my answer right now, Mr. Stang.

STANG: Wonderful. What is it?

*(Buddy picks up an ornate gilded telephone nearby and smashes it across Stang's face. Stang cries out, drops to the ground, his tumbler of rum and coke crashing to the floor, and Buddy brings the telephone down on his head repeatedly until the man collapses. Charles cries out in horror.)*

CHARLES: No! Buddy! No!

BUDDY: *(Flings telephone down on Stang's prone body.)* I thought I told you to call me Buddy, Mr. Stang.

CHARLES: Buddy! Why!

BUDDY: You know why, Charlie. You should never have agreed to the interview.

CHARLES: He wasn't going to find anything out, Buddy! He was just an entertainment writer! He was just going to do a short interview with me!

BUDDY: Didn't sound like no short interview to me, Charlie. Sounded to me like the guy was going to nose around until he found a story. And we can't have that, can we, Charlie?

CHARLES: You didn't have to do that, Buddy!

BUDDY: You shouldn't have arranged an interview without talking to me, Charlie. Maybe we could have avoided this.

CHARLES: Is he breathing?

BUDDY: If he is, I've done something wrong. There's only one thing for it now.

CHARLES: What is that, Buddy?

BUDDY: Dig a hole. Anybody asks, this guy never even came for the interview.

CHARLES: *(Sobbing.)* Buddy.

BUDDY: Aw, don't get all hysterical on me, Charlie. Here: *(He crosses to the console television, opens a reel-to-reel recorder atop it.)* Let's listen to some of your old tapes, how about that?

CHARLES: No, Buddy. You've never done anything like this. What have you done?

BUDDY: Just what needed doing, nothing more. I ain't done nothing to hurt you, now have I, Charlie?

CHARLES: No.

BUDDY: Let's keep it that way, why don't we? You wanted to play your tapes for the man. Now we're gonna play some tapes for him.

*(Buddy turns on the reel-to-reel tape recorder, and an old recording plays. Theme music, and an announcer's voice.)*

ANNOUNCER: United Northern Oil presents *Have I Got an Answer for You!* And here's your host, Mr. Bob Opal.

*(Buddy exits the room, and Charles kneels down next to Stang's body, still sobbing. He gingerly touches the body.)*

CHARLES: You didn't need to do that, Buddy. He wasn't going to find out anything.

BOB OPAL: *(From tape.)* Thank you, Dick Hennesy, Welcome to another episode of *Have I Got an Answer for You!*, and tonight I think we're going to have some doozies. Let me start out by introducing our distinguished panel of guests. You all remember Ms. Annie Simon, our celebrity panelist. Say, Annie, I hear you've got a movie coming out.

ANNIE: *(From tape.)* Why yes, Bob. *Stars and Shadows*, with Charles Webster.

BOB OPAL: *(From tape.)* Is it any good? *(General laughter from tape.)*

ANNIE: *(From tape.)* I think it is, Bob. It's a romance set on a Southern cattle ranch, and it's written by Phillip J. Hoskins. Say, you know Phil, don't you, Charles?

CHARLES: *(From tape.)* Yes, yes, Annie. Phil and I go back aways.

*(Buddy enters, carrying a sheet with him. As the tape plays, he sets the sheet on the floor, rolls Stang's body up in it, and carries the body out. Charles watches all this silently, still seated on the floor.)*

BOB OPAL: *(From tape.)* Longtime listeners will recognize that voice as belonging to our frequent guest, Hollywood screenwriter Charles Bentley. Are you back to stay with us for a while, Charles?

CHARLES: *(From tape.)* I hope so, Bob. There's not a lot of entertainment at the sanatorium. Another week of hydrotherapy and I think I would have gone mad.

BOB OPAL: *(From tape.)* Hydrotherapy, Charles?

CHARLES: *(From tape.)* Yes, Bob. It's all then rage nowadays. They put you in a bathtub and spray high pressure water on you.

ANNIE: *(From tape.)* Golly, Charles. For how long?

CHARLES: *(From tape.)* Hours, Annie. Days. After about five days in the bathtub, I finally called for my nurse. I said, "I don't know what you're trying to clean up, but you've probably washed it off by now." *(General laughter.)*

*(Buddy enters at this moment with a mop and bucket. He laughs softly.)*

BUDDY: Washed it off by now. Funny. *(Hands Charles mop and bucket.)* Your friend and me are gonna take a ride, Charles. Make yourself useful when I'm gone and get this floor clean.

BOB OPAL: *(From tape.)* You think the hydrotherapy helped, Charles?

CHARLES: *(From tape.)* In a way it did. Before I went into the sanatorium, I used to wash my hands a hundred times per day. Now I don't care if I never wash the sons-of-a-gun again. *(General laughter.)*

*(Exit Buddy. Charles sighs and begins to scrub the floor as the curtain lowers.)*

## Act One, Scene Two.

*(Charles sits on the sofa, a 16mm film projector on the table behind him, pointed out at the audience. Lights flicker as though he were watching a film, and we can hear the soundtrack. Buddy has a tumbler in one hand and a bottle in the other, and as he watches he drains the tumbler of liquid and refills it. Charles is very drunk. The show's host, JACK, speaks from the soundtrack.)*

JACK: *(From film.)* Now what is this I hear about you and cars, Charles?

CHARLES: *(From film.)* I can't help it if people spread rumors about me, Jack.

JACK: *(From film.)* I hear that you won't drive a car at all.

CHARLES: *(From film.)* Oh, that. Yes. Awful creatures, cars. They scare me silly.

JACK: *(From film.)* Do you think the cars mean to do you harm, Charles?

CHARLES: *(From film.)* Well, wouldn't that be the height of paranoia! No, I don't think the cars have any specific ill-will against me, and I don't think they are plotting against me.

JACK: *(From film.)* So why your fear, Charles?

CHARLES: *(From film.)* It's the drivers, Jack. *They are scheming to kill me*, don't you know?  
*(General laughter.)*

*(Now we hear Buddy at the door, laughing and talking, and we hear a high, girlish laugh. Charles leans over to the movie camera and switches the sound off. Buddy staggers in with a girl in his arms, WANDA, 22 and dressed in a short skirt and too much makeup. The two laugh as they bustle in. Buddy sees Charles and waves to him.)*

BUDDY: Hiya, Charlie!

WANDA: *(Imitating him, also clearly drunk.)* Hiya, Charlie!

BUDDY: Baby, I want you to meet my brother, Charlie. You're going to be seeing a lot of him tonight, so I want you two to be friends.

CHARLES: *(Standing.)* How do you do?

WANDA: Pleased to make your acquaintance, I'm sure.

BUDDY: Charlie, this is — oh, shoot, baby. I forget your name.

WANDA: Wanda!

BUDDY: Gosh, yeah. Wanda! Charlie, this is Wanda. Wanda, Charlie.

WANDA: Whatcha watching, Charlie? (*She peers at the screen.*) Is that the Jack Paar show? I used to love him when I was younger!

BUDDY: (*Peering at image.*) And do you see who he's interviewing?

WANDA: No, I don't know him.

BUDDY: Look closer.

WANDA: (*Looking closer.*) No, I don't know. Is that somebody famous?

BUDDY: I'll give you a hint, Wanda. It's somebody in this room.

WANDA: (*Stares at screen, and then turns to look at Charlie.*) Great day in the morning! That ain't you, is it!

CHARLES: You found out my secret, Wanda!

WANDA: Well how do you like that! Are you somebody famous!

CHARLES: Have you ever heard of me, Wanda?

WANDA: I can't say as I have.

CHARLES: Then how famous could I be?

BUDDY: Don't let my brother fool you, Wanda! He used to have his own radio show.

WANDA: Really!

CHARLES: No. I was a *guest*, really...

BUDDY: And he won an Academy Award.

WANDA: Really!

CHARLES: Well. Yes. Yes I did.

WANDA: For what!

CHARLES: I wrote a pirate movie, if you can believe it.

WANDA: (*Staring at Buddy, dumbfounded.*) Well, ain't you just a family of talent! Get me, going to the house of Buddy Bentley and his Oscar-winning brother! But don't stand on ceremony for me, fellas! Sit down, why don't you?



- CHARLES: I have a better suggestion. Why don't you sit down, and I'll fix you a drink.
- WANDA: Nah-uh. I wanna look around your house a little. If you don't mind.
- CHARLES: (*Turning off projector.*) We'll compromise. You look around, and I will fix you a drink. What will you have?
- WANDA: A Tom Collins.
- CHARLES: Coming up.
- BUDDY: Ain't my brother just the height of manners, baby?
- WANDA: Oh, yes. He's very sophisticated. I could tell the moment I met him. (*Charles goes to fix the drink. Wanda walks up to the second level, looks at the shrine to Buddy.*) Is this all from your movies, Buddy?
- BUDDY: Yes.
- CHARLES: Have you seen any of Buddy's movies, Wanda?
- WANDA: Are you kidding? I must have seen *all* of his movies! My mother was a fan, and she'd sit us down in front of the television every time a Buddy Bentley movie would come on, and we'd cook up popcorn and watch it together.
- CHARLES: Do you know, we do the same in this house?
- WANDA: Really?
- CHARLES: Yes, but we put on tuxedos to do so.
- WANDA: Oh, you're kidding!
- CHARLES: (*Handing her the drink.*) Did you have a favorite movie?
- WANDA: What was the one where you joined the circus, Buddy?
- BUDDY: *Big-top Buddy.*
- WANDA: Boy, I'll tell you, I was crazy about that one! There was that little tightrope walker in the film, and for weeks afterward I pretended I was her. I used to walk around our apartment with a little umbrella in my hand, wearing my tutu, pretending I was walking a mile above the audience.
- BUDDY: Aw, that's right! The tightrope walker! What was her name?

CHARLES: Corrina DiSilva. She actually was a tightrope walker, from an Italian circus family.

BUDDY: She spoke not one lick of English. The director had to teach her all of her lines phonetically. And you still couldn't understand anything she was saying! I'll tell you a secret.

WANDA: Yeah?

BUDDY: Shirley Temple dubbed all her lines.

WANDA: Yeah? Shirley Temple!

BUDDY: Buddy Bentley worked with all the best!

WANDA: Nobody is going to believe that I was here, Buddy. I mean, I *seen* some movie stars since I moved to Hollywood, sure. I seen Clark Gable getting lunch at Musso and Frank's. But I ain't never met a movie star in real life!

CHARLES: How did you two meet, anyway?

WANDA: Well, you know how it goes, Charlie. A girl's out taking a walk, a fella offers her a ride...

BUDDY: Sure. She looked a little lonesome, so I asked her if I could buy her some drinks.

WANDA: I would never have recognized him in a million years. I mean, I've only seen him as a kid, and look at him now!

CHARLES: Yes, look at him. How did you find out he was Buddy Bentley?

WANDA: He told me!

BUDDY: I told her.

WANDA: Yeah. After he'd bought me a couple of drinks, he scootched right up next to me and whispered in my ear. He says to me, you ever see any of those Buddy Bentley movies when you was young?

BUDDY: And she says, sure I did.

WANDA: And he says, what do you think happened to that guy?

BUDDY: And, get this, she says, I think he died in World War II, didn't he?

WANDA: And he gets to telling me that Buddy Bentley didn't die, but he *was* in World War II, and he fought at the battle of Iwo Jima. And while he's telling me this, I

get to thinking, boy, this guy knows an awful lot about Buddy Bentley.

BUDDY: And, would you believe it, she turns to me and she says, What are you, some kind of relative or something? *(Buddy and Wanda laugh at this.)*

WANDA: Yeah. He just laughs at me, and then I look closer at him, and I figured it out even before he told me his name.

BUDDY: Imagine that! She thought I had died in World War II!

WANDA: I don't know why I thought that! It must be because I ain't heard from you for so long!

*(Buddy falls silent.)*

WANDA: *(Nervously.)* But then, I ain't never even heard of your brother, and he's won an Oscar. It don't mean nothing that I ain't heard of you in so long, Buddy.

BUDDY: Of course it don't, baby. I bet you didn't even know that my brother has a play on Broadway right now.

WANDA: *(Turning to Charles, amazed.)* No! Really?

BUDDY: It's a big hit even.

WANDA: It is? Isn't that wonderful for you, Charlie?

CHARLIE: It's gratifying, yes.

BUDDY: My brother's a real stand-up guy, Wanda. He's a heck of a talent. If you talked to him for just a few minutes, I bet you would go crazy for him.

CHARLES: Now, Buddy.

WANDA: I wouldn't be surprised, you know. Boy, I wouldn't be surprised. Your brother's got real class, Buddy, I'll tell you what.

CHARLES: Oh, you know it. He's a graduate from Harvard.

BUDDY: Really! And I can tell he's got a good sense of humor. That goes a long way for a gal, Charlie, that's the truth of it.

CHARLES: Not just for women, Wanda.

BUDDY: Charlie was famous for his sense of humor, baby. He used to appear on television all the time.

WANDA: Like the Jack Paar show?

BUDDY: Jack couldn't get enough of him! How many times did you appear on the show, Charlie?

CHARLES: Thirty-seven times.

WANDA: Cripes! Really?

BUDDY: Would you like to see some of it?

CHARLES: Now, Buddy, why bore your guest with yesterday's news?

BUDDY: I want Wanda to like you, Charlie. I brought her here to meet you.

CHARLES: *(Meaningfully.)* I appreciate that, Buddy, but it hasn't gone so well in the past. You know that.

WANDA: Maybe it's because you never met me, Charlie.

BUDDY: Yeah, Charlie. Maybe it's because you never met Wanda.

WANDA: I'm impressed as hell that you were on Jack Paar so much, Charlie. Boy, I'd love to see some of the interview, if you wouldn't mind.

BUDDY: He don't mind. Do you, Charlie?

WANDA: C'mon, Charlie. I'm real curious.

*(She sits down on the sofa expectantly. Charles sighs and turns on the projector.)*

CHARLES: Very well. If you fall asleep, I will make certain to wake you up so you can get home before curfew.

*(He sits next to her, and Wanda moves so that she's close to him, absent-mindedly putting her hands on his arms. Buddy remains in the distance, watching.)*

WANDA: I don't have any curfew. *(Laughs.)* Your brother is real funny, do you know that, Buddy?

BUDDY: You have no idea how funny, Wanda.

WANDA: Turn the sound on, Charlie. I want to hear what you got to say to Jack Paar.

*(Charles turns on the sound on the projector, and they watch in silence.)*

JACK: *(From film.)* Betty Cassel once told me that she had to drive you to Santa

Monica...

CHARLES: *(From film.)* Oh no, she didn't tell you that story, did she?

JACK: *(From film.)* She said that you're very particular about what streets you go down...

CHARLES: *(From film.)* Poor Betty. She had never driven me anywhere, so she didn't know. We had a screening of *Six Women* out in Santa Monica, and she kept taking the wrong streets.

JACK: *(From film.)* She didn't know how to get out there, do you mean?

CHARLES: *(From film.)* Oh, she knew. She just didn't know what streets she shouldn't drive me on.

JACK: *(From film.)* Yes, she told me that every street she went down, you would say, not this street — it has bad memories for me.

CHARLES: *(From film.)* Oh, gosh, yes. She'd try and go down Sunset, and Sunset is just too embarrassing for me. I had a big argument with Danny Kaye there. He hadn't returned my phone calls in a while. We made up eventually, but going down Sunset always reminds me of that awful argument, and so I couldn't stand it.

JACK: *(From film.)* That makes sense.

CHARLES: *(From film.)* And then she would go south on Highland, and I couldn't stand that.

JACK: *(From film.)* Why?

CHARLES: *(From film.)* I had an altercation with the police on Highland. It was very frightening. They arrested me for my pills, and only found out later that I had a prescription for them. But every time I go down Highland, I get the same feeling of dread.

JACK: *(From film.)* As I think we all would.

CHARLES: *(From film.)* But then poor Betty would try La Brea, and that was no good — I went to a party on La Brea where I just felt like a complete misfit, and I didn't want to remember that. And then Betty would turn down another street, and I would remember accidentally getting lost on that street at night, and how much that frightened me. And she would try another street, and there was the first house I lived in when I moved to Hollywood, and it would remind me of my wife, and my divorce.

JACK: *(From film.)* So are there any streets that don't have bad memories for you,

Charles?

CHARLES: *(From film.)* There are still a few, Jack. But I suppose if there is an underworld, with devils and pitchforks and such, it will be like Los Angeles. Endless streets filled with bad memories. The imps won't even have to poke me with their tridents — they will just need to put me in the passenger seat of a car and drive me around for a while.

JACK: *(From film.)* We have to cut to a commercial now, Charles. But tell me you'll come back soon.

CHARLES: *(From film.)* Of course I will, Jack. If I can find the right streets to get here.  
*(General laughter.)*

*(Charles reaches over and switches off the camera. Wanda looks at him, dazzled.)*

WANDA: Did you ever meet Jack Paar outside of the show?

BUDDY: Sure he did! Jack couldn't throw a party without inviting Charlie!

WANDA: Really?

CHARLES: I suppose Jack Paar liked to hear me talk about devils with pitchforks, Wanda.

WANDA: Do you really believe in hell, Charlie?

CHARLES: In all seriousness, yes I do, Wanda. Buddy and I were brought up Catholic, and I used to spend my childhood thinking about hell. I would try to think about what it would mean to suffer for eternity, and I would try to imagine how long eternity was. And as I got older, I started to realize that there are some things that people do to each other that are so terrible that they should be punished for it, and that punishment should last forever. I'm sorry, Wanda, that's not a very witty answer.

WANDA: No, but boy it's so *thoughtful*, Charles. The ladies must have been wild about you.

CHARLES: *(Laughs.)* No, not me, Wanda. Buddy was always the lady's man.

BUDDY: Don't sell yourself short, Charlie. Jack Paar never asked me questions about devils or nothing.

CHARLES: But you believe in hell, don't you, Buddy?

BUDDY: Believe in it? Man, I've seen it. *(To Wanda.)* I was in the South Pacific theater, you know.

CHARLES: Oh, yes, Wanda. You should hear Buddy tell you about the Battle of Iwo Jima!

WANDA: Boy, it must have been something!

BUDDY: Aw, Wanda don't want to hear about that, Charlie. She's here to talk to you.

CHARLES: But it's such a good story, Wanda. Do you know that Buddy won the Purple Heart?

WANDA: No!

CHARLES: Yes!

WANDA: Really?

CHARLES: Oh, yes! Buddy, why don't you show her the Purple Heart? It will only take a minute.

WANDA: Would you? I've never seen a Purple Heart.

BUDDY: Oh, I don't know.

CHARLES: C'mon, Buddy. Give the girl a thrill.

BUDDY: Well, all right.

*(Buddy exits. Wanda watches him go, and then turns to Charles.)*

WANDA: Gosh, Charlie. Your brother must be some sort of a hero.

CHARLES: *(Suddenly very brisk.)* What did Buddy tell you about me, Wanda?

WANDA: Oh, he said you were a great guy and that I should meet you.

CHARLES: What else? I know there's more, Wanda.

WANDA: Well, he said you don't get out of the house at all, and that you get awful lonely. He said I should try to cheer you up. You don't mind, do you? If I cheer you up a little? *(She moves closer to Charles.)*

CHARLES: *(Gripping her arm.)* Listen to me very carefully, Wanda. Do you have cab fare?

WANDA: What?

CHARLES: Cab fare. Do you have enough to take a taxi home?

WANDA: Sure, I guess.



CHARLES: Don't ask any questions, Wanda. Just do as I tell you. Walk out of this house, walk down to the diner at the bottom of the hill, and get yourself a taxi home.

WANDA: Charlie! It took 15 minutes to drive up here! Walking down the hill will take at least a half an hour, and there are no lights on the road.

CHARLES: Then go next door and knock at the door. Tell them your ride left without you and ask if you can use the phone. Tell them anything, Wanda. Just *get out of this house*.

WANDA: Charlie! You're scaring me!

CHARLES: Wanda, you don't know how scared you should be. Now go! Just go!

*(He flings her away. Wanda rises, frightened, and hurries over to get her purse and her wrap. As she does so, Buddy enters, wearing his Marine uniform and carrying a decorative box. He sees her holding her things and shaking, and he frowns.)*

BUDDY: Wanda? Are you leaving?

WANDA: Charlie wants me to, Buddy.

BUDDY: Yeah? Is that true, Charlie?

CHARLIE: Well, Buddy, it's getting so late...

BUDDY: Oh, don't be like that, Charlie. *(Crosses to Wanda, takes her things out of her hands.)* You don't have to be anywhere, do you, Wanda? I'll drive you home whenever you need to go. If you need to go now, just tell me. We'll get in the car and go.

WANDA: No, I don't need to go, I guess.

BUDDY: I guess I shouldn't have left you alone with Charlie. Do you remember what I told you about him?

WANDA: *(Laughs, relieved.)* Yes.

CHARLES: What did Buddy tell you about me?

WANDA: He said you were very shy, and it makes you act funny sometimes.

BUDDY: Sit down next to Charlie, Wanda, and I'll show you my Purple Heart.

WANDA: Oh! You're wearing your uniform!

- BUDDY: Yes! I thought it would give more life to the story. Call me a gosh-darned ham, Wanda, but I just can't tell a story unless I'm in costume. *(He leads her by the hand to the sofa, seats her next to Charles.)* If you want to go after the story, I'll drive you home. How does that sound?
- WANDA: Well, that all depends on how Charlie feels.
- BUDDY: You know, Wanda, Charlie's shy, but I got a good feeling about the two of you. You just be nice to him, and I'm sure he'll let you stay as long as you want. Now look at this. *(He opens the case, showing her the Purple Heart.)* Whaddya think?
- WANDA: *(Gasps.)* It's beautiful! Can I hold it?
- BUDDY: Sure you can, baby! *(He takes it out, hands it to her.)* And look at this. *(He takes her hand, presses it to the chest of his uniform.)* Do you feel that?
- WANDA: Yeah. It's been repaired. I can feel the stitching.
- BUDDY: That's where I got shot.
- WANDA: Right in the chest!
- BUDDY: Right in the chest. Boom!
- WANDA: Boom!
- BUDDY: Iwo Jima was a terrific battle, Wanda. It don't seem like much of an island to look at — just a little five-mile-long pork chop in the Pacific, halfway between Tokyo and Saipan. But the Japs had covered every square inch of that island with tunnels and underground bunkers, baby. They were sealed in there tight, Wanda, and they wasn't going to give up an inch of that island without a fight. And there was maybe 21,000 Japs on that island, lying in wait for us, hidden in caves and in the trees and under the ground.
- WANDA: Wow.
- BUDDY: So we pounded the island from the air. It was the longest sustained aerial offensive of WWII, Wanda, meant to crush that island into dust. But when the smoke had cleared, we hadn't touched them. The Japs were still hiding on the island, safely buried in the rocks. And on February 19, 1945, the Marines stormed the island. We knew the island was going to be a meat grinder, and we knew that many of us were going to die there. Our commanding officer told us what to expect, and what was expected of us. He said, "Every man will resist until the end, making his position his tomb." And he told us, "Every man will do his best to kill ten enemy soldiers." At two in the morning, the big guns of the navy started pounding the island, blasting at the island for an hour. We loaded into our transports, and looking out at the island, it looked like it was

burning. They sent us to the island at 8:30 a.m., and we stormed the beach. And we knew we was sitting ducks there: The Japs had machine gunners on Mt. Suribachi, 550 feet above us, aimed right at the shore. So the moment we landed, the machine guns started mowing us down. The doors to the transports would open, and immediately marines would fall, screaming, blood spraying out of them, as machine gun fire ripped through us.

WANDA: Jeez!

BUDDY: And the Marines that made it to shore didn't have it much easier, Wanda. Iwo Jima is all volcanic ash, so we couldn't dig in and make foxholes. We was just left to rush the island without any cover. And we couldn't see the Japs. We would just wait until we heard machine gun fire, and then we ran toward it and threw grenades at it. Seventy-five percent of the men who stormed that island died on it, Wanda. Almost 7,000 Marines in 36 days. But we killed 20,000 Japs, and we took the island.

WANDA: When did you get shot?

BUDDY: I was in the first attack wave, Wanda. I got a machine-gun bullet in my chest stepping off the transport. It broke through my breast bone and lodged itself right next to my heart. I lay on that beach for two and a half hours, fighting to breathe, watching marines all around me take machine gun fire to the head, the throat, the stomach. Some of them were dead before they hit the ground, and some of them just lay there screaming. By the time the medics pulled me off the beach, I was in a puddle of blood an inch deep. And you know, I still got the bullet in me.

WANDA: Yeah?

BUDDY: Yeah. The doctors didn't dare take it out, because it was so close to my heart — one wrong move and I would have died on the operating table. So they put a metal plate over it where my breast bone used to be and sewed me back up. Then they sent me back home after a few months with a Purple Heart in this little box. A was a hero for a little while — newspaper stories everywhere, meeting with the President. The studios tried to make a big deal out of it. There was a big parade for me in Hollywood. You remember that, don't you, Charlie?

CHARLES: It was something, Wanda. They shut down Hollywood Boulevard. Buddy got both a star on the Walk of Fame and his handprints in front of Grauman's Chinese Theater on the same day, the only time that has ever happened.

WANDA: Boy! Next time I'm on Hollywood Boulevard, I'll look for it. So what did you do then, Buddy? You started making movies again?

BUDDY: One movie, Wanda, yes. *A Homecoming for Buddy*. Did you ever see it?

- WANDA: No, I don't think so.
- BUDDY: Nobody saw it. It wasn't that great a movie. Wouldn't you say, Charlie?
- CHARLES: They rushed it into production, Wanda. It was a bad script. The dialogue was terrible and they made it a musical. Imagine it if you will. Buddy, dressed like a Marine, storming the beach at Iwo Jima while singing.
- BUDDY: A chorus of Marines singing behind me.
- CHARLES: Who would want to see that? Although the film has developed a certain cult following.
- WANDA: Aw, Buddy! That's awful!
- BUDDY: And after that, all the soldiers started coming back from the war. Audie Murphy came back, and he was the most decorated soldier in World War II. So all of a sudden there were all these Audie Murphy pictures, and the studio didn't want to make no more Buddy Bentley movies. They told me there was a problem with insurance. Because I still had the bullet in my chest, nobody wanted to insure my movies, because I could die while filming. But I figure that this was just an excuse.
- WANDA: Yeah? An excuse for what?
- BUDDY: Well, you know, Wanda. Buddy Bentley was a child star. Who wants to see him when he's 22?
- CHARLES: The studios did you wrong, Buddy, I have always said that. Wouldn't you agree, Wanda?
- WANDA: Yeah, Buddy. You got gypped! That just ain't right. You being a war hero and all.
- CHARLES: You might have been a different man, Buddy, if the studios had treated you the way you deserved. It might have been better for you.
- BUDDY: Yeah, well, let's not get all caught up on my sob story. I had it good for a while, and how many can say that? Heck, Wanda, my last movie before the war got me my third Oscar. So I went out with a bang. We filmed it just before I went off to war. Do you know the one — *Tell It to the Marines, Buddy?*
- WANDA: Oh boy, do I ever! That was my mother's favorite. She loved the music.
- BUDDY: Heck yes, Wanda! What was her favorite song?
- WANDA: Oh, she loved *March, Soldier Buddy, March*. But that wasn't my favorite.

BUDDY: Which one was your favorite, Wanda?

WANDA: Well, call me a romantic, but I loved that song you sang to your girl just before you left for the Marines. *Tonight It's Just the Moonlight and You.*

BUDDY: Yeah? Do you hear that, Charlie.

CHARLES: I heard it, yes, Buddy.

BUDDY: Who do you think wrote the lyrics to that song?

WANDA: Was it somebody famous? Was it Irving Berlin?

BUDDY: I'll give you a hint, Wanda. It was somebody in this room.

WANDA: *(To Charles.)* You?

CHARLES: Yes, Wanda. It seems so long ago now, but I started my career in Hollywood writing songs and lyrics for movies.

WANDA: Charlie! I'm crazy about that song! Do you know that it always makes me cry?

CHARLES: Thank you. I actually wrote it for someone I know.

BUDDY: Would you like to hear it?

CHARLES: Oh, Buddy. Please, no.

BUDDY: Don't be so shy, Charlie. I'll tell you what, Wanda. I'll play the song for you if you'll dance with my brother.

WANDA: Boy, it would be an honor!

CHARLES: Buddy.

BUDDY: *(Seating himself at the piano.)* Are you going to turn a lady down when she wants to dance with you, Charlie. Don't let him give you no for an answer, Wanda, or I'm going to stop playing. *(Playing the piano and singing.)*

What a face  
What a smile  
I'm dazzled  
So I'll  
Make a play  
Try a line  
Crack a joke  
Offer wine

It ain't easy when I'm dazzled like this  
There's a hint of foolishness to all that I do  
But I'll be a fool dear if it's a fool that you want  
And tonight it's just the moonlight and you

I want to hold you and to whisper sweet words  
I want to write private notes, yes I do  
All that I want is just sentimental sport  
But tonight it's just the moonlight and you.

*(Wanda stands, grasps Charles hands. She sways in place, smiling, tugging gently on his hands. Charles sighs and stands, leading her in a genteel fox trot.)*

BUDDY: *(Still playing.)* What do you think of my brother as a dancer, Wanda?

WANDA: Boy, he's just divine, Buddy. *(She reaches up, rubs her hands through his hair.)* You must have been a real ladykiller in your day, Charlie.

CHARLES: *(Laughs.)* I'm flattered you think that of me, Wanda.

WANDA: I mean, look at you. You're smart, Charlie, and you got a sense of humor. You've got great style in how you dress, I noticed it the moment I saw you. Any girl who walked away from you would have to be out of her mind.

CHARLES: You should tell my ex-wife that, Wanda. One day she packed up everything she owned and walked out on me.

WANDA: I can't imagine why should would do that, Charlie.

CHARLES: It was simple, Wanda. She caught me in bed with her 21-year-old brother.

WANDA: *(Beat.)* What?

CHARLES: *(Gently.)* I'm a homosexual, Wanda.

WANDA: You don't like girls?

CHARLES: I'm afraid I don't, Wanda.

WANDA: *(Steps back from him, turns to Buddy, angrily.)* I *knew* it. The moment I walked in this door and saw him, Buddy, I wondered what the heck was going on!

BUDDY: Aw, you shouldn't have told her that, Charlie.

CHARLES: Ten minutes from now, she would have found out on her own, Buddy. You know that.

WANDA: Well, I don't know what you were thinking, Buddy. But I expect to get my money anyway.

BUDDY: Do you?

WANDA: Yes I do. We agreed on a price beforehand, and I didn't come up all this way to walk away with nothing.

BUDDY: You'll get your money, Wanda. But I expect you to work for it. If my brother Charlie don't want you, then I'm gonna have a turn at you. *(Rises.)*

CHARLES: *(Hissing.)* Wanda, run.

*(Wanda glances at Charles, startled, and then sees Buddy moving toward her. She bolts for the door, but Buddy catches her arm.)*

BUDDY: Yeah, baby, you and me gonna have some fun.

*(Buddy pushes her back against the far wall, hard. She crashes into a table there, upsetting it, spilling a lamp onto the floor, where is pops and goes dark.)*

CHARLES: Buddy! Don't!

BUDDY: *(Moving toward Wanda.)* Is that how you prefer it, baby? You'd rather do this in the dark? *(He grasps her wrist, pulls her up. Then he wraps his hand around her neck and shoves her, pushing her into a floor lamp. Wanda and the lamp collapse, and the lamp goes dark. Buddy goes over to a wall light.)* Still too light in here. *(He smashes the light with his fist, and it goes dark. Wanda lies on the floor opposite him, gasping for air, trying to scream. Buddy points at Charles.)* Play the song, Charlie.

CHARLES: *(Weeping.)* Oh. Buddy, no!

BUDDY: Play the song, Charlie. Don't make me ask you again. It'll be worse for her if you don't play it.

*(Charles crosses to the piano, sits at it. He plays an instrumental rendition of "Tonight it's Just the Moonlight and You," distraught. Buddy smashes another light, and the stage area falls into blackness, but for Charles at the Piano.)*

CHARLES: Buddy, no. Please, Buddy — no!

BUDDY: Here's where you earn your twenty dollars, whore.

*(He marches across the stage to Wanda, bathed in darkness. We cannot see what he does to her, but we hear blows and Wanda crying out in agony, and Buddy's labored breathing as it grows increasingly rapid. Charles closes his eyes, and his piano playing goes off tune. As*



*Buddy's gasping grows more ecstatic, Charles simply beats his fists against the piano keyboard, making an awful din. At last, Buddy stops, and Charles lowers his head, covering his face with his hands.*

*Buddy steps into the light now, fastening his belt. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out his wallet, removing four fives and flinging them back at her.)*

**BUDDY:** *(Strangely subdued.)* Twenty dollars. *(looking at his shirt, which is splashed with blood.)* Oh, a stain! Damn it! *(To Charles, still oddly quiet.)* I'm going to go run this under water, Charlie. See if the girl is okay.

*(Charles lifts his head from his hands, watches Buddy exit. Then he looks back at the girl. We can hear her groans and sobbing, and Charles rises and crosses to her.)*

**CHARLES:** Wanda? *(She lets out a shrill scream as he approaches her, and Charles shushes her gently.)* Shh. Wanda. It's Charlie. I'm not going to hurt you. *(She still cries in terror, and he sits next to her in the darkness, talking to her in a reassuring manner.)* I'm not going to hurt you, Wanda. Let's get you fastened up, now, Wanda? Okay? Is it okay if I fasten you up? *(Her cries of terror diminish, replaced by a pitiful sobbing.)* Oh, Wanda, I am so sorry about this! Can you walk? Stand up, Wanda, and try and walk, will you? Here, lean on me.

*(Charles helps Wanda walk into the light, up the few steps to the piano. He sits her on the piano stool. Wanda is horribly beaten, blood spilling from a swollen lip and nose, bruises forming around her eyes, with her dress torn.)*

**CHARLES:** Wanda, I am so sorry. Oh, you poor girl. Let me get you some ice. *(He rises, crosses to the bar and puts some ice into a hand-towel. He crosses to Wanda, presses it up to her nose, and she cries out sharply.)* Hold this here, Wanda, it will help stop the bleeding.

**WANDA:** *(Barely comprehensible.)* Why?

**CHARLES:** Because he knows he can get away with it, Wanda. Because you're a prostitute, and who are you going to tell.

**WANDA:** *(Still muffled.)* The police.

**CHARLES:** You and I both know that you're not going to go to the police, Wanda. Who do you think they would lock up? You probably got a record, don't you? *(Wanda nods.)* Buddy would say he's never seen you before in his life, and who would they believe. *(Wanda begins to cry again.)* It's better this way, Wanda. Right now, if Buddy thought for a second that you could get him into trouble, I doubt you would ever walk out of here alive.

**WANDA:** *(Fiercely.)* Why did you help him?

CHARLES: Oh, Wanda! I tried to warn you! Oh, if only you had left when I asked! I could have told him that you got sick, Wanda, I could have made up a story!

WANDA: This ain't the first time he's done this, is it, Charlie?

CHARLES: No, it isn't Wanda. And you got to go home now, and you know well enough that if you ever see Buddy Bentley again, you'll turn and run. In fact, let's get you out of the house now, Wanda. Right now.

WANDA: Why?

CHARLES: I'm not sure you're safe. Buddy's getting worse.

*(Curtain.)*

## Act Two, Scene One

*(The set is normal again, the light bulbs fixed, the smashed lamp replaced. The television is on, playing softly, casting its flickering light against the back of the stage. Buddy enters, dressed in a magnificent white dinner jacket and black tuxedo pants. He carries with him a television dinner tray and a bowl of popcorn, which he sets by the sofa in front of the television. Buddy fishes out a pocketwatch, glances at it.)*

BUDDY: *(Calling out.)* Charlie! We only got a few minutes before the show starts.

*(Charles enters, dressed in a black tuxedo. His face is haggard, and he slumps heavily against the door, staring at Buddy with hollow eyes.)*

CHARLES: Buddy, I don't feel up to this. Are you going to force me?

BUDDY: C'mon, Charlie. It's *Buddy in Love*!

CHARLES: Buddy...

BUDDY: You're already all dressed up. C'mon, Charlie. It'll lift your mood. *(Rises, crosses to Charles.)* Take my arm, Charlie. C'mon, I'll help you to the sofa.

*(Buddy grasps Charles's hand, places it on his arm, pulling him forward. Charles relents, allowing Buddy to pull him over to the sofa, where he sits heavily.)*

CHARLES: I'm not well, Buddy.

BUDDY: It'll pass, Charlie.

CHARLES: I need my pills, Buddy. Give me just one pill and I'll be okay to watch the movie with you.

BUDDY: We've already talked about this, Charlie. No pills. Now shush, Charlie.

CHARLES: Buddy.

BUDDY: *(Sharply.)* No pills, Charlie!

CHARLES: I'm sorry I told that girl to run away, Buddy.

BUDDY: Well, you should of thought of that beforehand. Maybe now you'll learn your lesson.

CHARLES: *(Pathetically.)* I'm sorry, Buddy. I just don't like to see you hurt them.

BUDDY: Aw, I only gave her a few pokes, Charlie. Women like that get their faces pushed in now and again. It just goes with the territory.

- CHARLES: Of course you're right, Buddy.
- BUDDY: Besides, she was meant for you.
- CHARLES: I know she was, Buddy.
- BUDDY: I mean, for gosh sake's, Charlie. Won't you even try with a girl?
- CHARLES: Next time I will, Buddy. I promise.
- BUDDY: This ain't such a bad way to get cured, is it, Charlie? I mean, not like the sanatoriums you was in earlier?
- CHARLES: No. Your cure is better, Buddy.
- BUDDY: Remember what they used to do with you, Charlie? Remember the hydrotherapy?
- CHARLES: Yes.
- BUDDY: You didn't like that very much, did you?
- CHARLES: No.
- BUDDY: And think about what they would do nowadays, Charlie. I hear they got electroshock treatments, or insulin, or sometimes they just lobotomize a patient. Ain't that just awful?
- CHARLES: It sounds awful, Buddy.
- BUDDY: So whaddya say you try my cure next time, Charlie?
- CHARLES: I will, Buddy. I promise. Will you let me have a pill now?
- BUDDY: Not just yet, Charlie. Maybe after the show. If you're a good boy. Oh — here it comes on! (*Buddy leans forward, turns up the volume.*)
- ANNOUNCER: (*From television.*) The King Sausage Saturday Night Feature is proud to present tonight's special feature, *Buddy in Love!* (*Theme music starts.*)
- BUDDY: I think this was always my favorite movie. You know, Charlie?
- CHARLES: It's a great one. Your second Oscar.
- BUDDY: My only film opposite Beth Hayward. She shoulda won that year too.

CHARLES: Beautiful girl, Buddy.

BUDDY: Yeah. I remember that Saturday when we was filming, you took me and her to the Santa Monica pier.

CHARLES: I remember.

BUDDY: We went real early, so that we could avoid the crowds. We rode the carousel over and over again, and afterwards you took us to a malt shop and we had hamburgers and milk shakes. It was almost like a real date.

CHARLES: She seemed fond of you.

BUDDY: Poor kid. How old was she?

CHARLES: 14. A year younger than you.

BUDDY: Pretty girl. Heck of a singing voice.

CHARLES: Beautiful

BUDDY: Pity what happened to Beth, wasn't it?

CHARLES: Yes, it was.

BUDDY: She shoulda been smarter. She shoulda gone with pills instead of dope, I figure. Look at you, Charlie. Whatever the tabloids said about you, they never called you a dope fiend.

CHARLES: That's true.

BUDDY: Poor Beth.

*(They watch television in silence for a short while. Charles fidgets in place, shifting positions, unable to find a comfortable position. Quietly, he starts weeping. After a moment, Buddy notices.)*

BUDDY: *(Alarmed.)* Hey, Charlie! What is it?

CHARLES: I can't continue like this, Buddy.

BUDDY: C'mon, Charlie — tough it out. You'll get your pills after the show.

CHARLES: Not the pills, Charlie. I just ... *(Sobbing loudly.)* What is it, Buddy?

BUDDY: What, Charlie?

- CHARLES: What happened?
- BUDDY: What do you mean, what happened?
- CHARLES: What happened to you? Was it the war? What happened to you, Buddy?
- BUDDY: *(Laughing nervously.)* Charlie, c'mon. Stop it now, you're getting hysterical.
- CHARLES: *(Clutching at him.)* What happened, Buddy?
- BUDDY: I don't know what you're talking about, Charlie. Calm down, wouldja? You're scaring me.
- CHARLES: Things weren't always this way, were they?
- BUDDY: No, but things change, don't they?
- CHARLES: You were a sweet kid, Buddy. Such a sweet kid. It must have been the war.
- BUDDY: Watch the movie, wouldja, Charlie?
- CHARLES: Was it lying in the mud, Buddy? Was it getting shot in the chest and lying on the ground that made you like this, Buddy?
- BUDDY: Nothing made me like nothing. Watch the movie.
- CHARLES: When did you turn sick, Buddy? I mean, when did you start beating up women?
- BUDDY: *(Angrily.)* Watch the movie! *(They watch in silence, Buddy scowling.)* I don't beat up women, Charlie. *(Beat.)* I knock a few whores around, so what? They're just whores, ain't they, Charlie?
- CHARLES: But it's more than the prostitutes, Buddy! You know that. Something is twisted inside of you. Something makes you not care if you hurt people, or do more than hurt them —
- BUDDY: *Enough! (Rising threateningly.)* Watch the movie, Charlie! Shut up and WATCH THE MOVIE! Or don't you ever want to get your pills?
- (The doorbell rings.)*
- BUDDY: Aw, cripes! Who is that now? *(He goes and glances through the windows, stiffens.)*
- CHARLES: Who is it?
- BUDDY: The police. *(The bell rings again.)* I'm going to go answer that, Charlie. You better be on your best behavior, Charlie. Do you hear what I'm telling you?

CHARLES: Yes.

BUDDY: I'm not kidding around now, Charlie. You listen to what I'm telling you. You just sit and watch television, and let me take care of things, or I'm going to take all of your pill bottles and throw them out. You understand?

CHARLES: I understand.

BUDDY: You better. Remember, Charlie — without me, there ain't no pills. Without me, it's back to the sanatorium. You got that?

CHARLES: Yes, Buddy.

*(Buddy answers the door, revealing two policemen, OFFICERS HARING AND SPROUSE. They take off their hats, pie-eyed.)*

BUDDY: Officers? Yes?

HARING: Mr. Buddy Bentley?

BUDDY: Yes.

SPROUSE: Holy cow.

HARING: Quiet, Sprouse. *(To Buddy.)* I'm officer George Haring, and this is officer George Sprouse.

BUDDY: You're both named George?

HARING: Yes, sir.

BUDDY: *(To Charles.)* Did you hear that, Charlie? Both of these officers are named George!

CHARLES: Yes?

BUDDY: Ain't that funny?

CHARLES: *(Calling out.)* You gentlemen must get some ribbing down at the station.

HARING: At first.

SPROUSE: Everybody calls me "Little George" to make things simple.

BUDDY: *(To Haring.)* Does that make you "Big George?"



HARING: No. Just George. Listen, we don't mean to bother you, Mr. Bentley. Is this a good time?

BUDDY: Well, my brother and me were just sitting down to watch a movie.

CHARLES: (*Calling out.*) Why don't you invite the gentlemen in, Buddy?

BUDDY: Yes, yes, I forgot my manners. Come in, officers.

(*He steps out of the doorway and the two policemen enter*)

SPROUSE: What is it you're watching?

BUDDY: Well, The King Sausage Saturday Night Feature.

SPROUSE: Oh, I love them old movies. I watch it whenever I get a chance. What are they playing tonight?

BUDDY: Well ...

CHARLES: Don't be shy, Buddy. We're watching *Buddy in Love*.

HARING: Hey, that's one of your films, ain't it, Mr. Bentley?

BUDDY: Call me Buddy, Officer Haring.

HARING: I seen that film when I was 16 years old. That's a grand one.

SPROUSE: Is that why you're dressed up like that?

HARING: Little George, please. I'm sure they are expecting company.

CHARLES: (*Cheerily.*) No. No company. We just like to dress up when one of Buddy's movies is on.

HARING: Pardon me for asking, sir. Are you Charles Bentley?

CHARLES: (*Surprised.*) You've heard of me?

HARING: We have a few questions for you as well, Mr. Bentley. But this is a bad time ...

BUDDY: We could come down to the station later ...

CHARLES: Nonsense! We made plenty of popcorn! Why don't you gentlemen join us, and you can ask us questions during the commercial breaks and station identification.

BUDDY: Charles, I'm sure these fellas got plenty of other work to do.

CHARLES: Well, it's going to look odd if we just send them away, isn't it, Buddy? I mean, we haven't even asked them what they want to question us about.

BUDDY: *(Starts. Then nods.)* What is it that you gentlemen wanted to ask about, anyway?

HARING: Missing person.

CHARLES: Anyone we know?

HARING: A reporter for the *Weekly Variety* named Rudolf Stang.

CHARLES: Oh! I know that name!

HARING: You do?

CHARLES: Yes. I have a little story about him. But it will have to wait until the commercial. Now, won't you join us for the movie?

HARING: I suppose it couldn't do no harm.

CHARLES: Pull up onto the sofa, gentlemen.

*(Haring and Sprouse sit down next to Charles. He offers them popcorn. Haring decline, but Sprouse takes the popcorn appreciatively, munching on it, eyes fixed on the television. Buddy watches them, face a mask, then sits himself in a chair next to the sofa.)*

CHARLES: *(To Sprouse.)* You ever seen this?

SPROUSE: Not this one.

CHARLES: But you've seen Buddy's pictures before?

SPROUSE: A few. On Saturday morning television. What's the one where he's kidnapped by Indians?

CHARLES: The name is on the tip of my tongue. Buddy, what was that film called?

BUDDY: *Deadwood Buddy.*

CHARLES: Wasn't Gene Autry in that one?

BUDDY: Yes.

CHARLES: That man was a sweetheart to work with.

SPROUSE: Yeah?

CHARLES: Probably still is. He's a millionaire now, you know. Owns hundreds of radio stations.

SPROUSE: Yeah?

CHARLES: An economic genius. He trained as an accountant. You ever meet him? I mean, he has a house here in the Hills. This is your beat, right?

SPROUSE: Never met him. How about you, George?

HARING: No. Met Hopalong Cassidy once.

CHARLES: Yeah?

SPROUSE: Break and entering case. Somebody pried open his office window, took some papers. Nice guy.

CHARLES: You must meet a lot of movie stars.

SPROUSE: Some. Some.

CHARLES: You ever watch one of their movies with them?

SPROUSE: No, can't say as I have.

HARING: This is a first for me.

CHARLES: Well, that's just how Buddy Bentley is. He ain't your usual movie star. He's a war hero, you know.

HARING: Purple Heart winner, ain't you?

BUDDY: Yes. Iwo Jima.

HARING: Is that a fact? Marine?

BUDDY: Fourth Division.

HARING: *(Reaches forward to shake his hand)*. 27th Infantry.

BUDDY: The Wolfhounds?

HARING: Yes, sir.

CHARLES: *(To Sprouse.)* You serve?

SPROUSE: Not during wartime. But I was in the Coast Guard.

CHARLES: I feel so left out. Flat feet. Buddy is the hero in this family.

HARING: I'll say. Iwo Jima!

CHARLES: Iwo Jima is right! A lot of Hollywood actors signed up to make educational films during the war. Buddy threw himself into the action! He's not your ordinary movie star.

BUDDY: Aw, Charlie.

CHARLES: You know he used to have his own business after the war?

HARING: Something to do with movies?

CHARLES: Heck, no! Buddy owned an auto dealership! Ain't that true, brother?

BUDDY: Yes.

CHARLES: What was it called?

BUDDY: Buddy's Bentleys.

CHARLES: How do you like that! Everybody thinks Buddy is some high and mighty muckety muck, but he's a medal-winning war hero and a working stiff.

BUDDY: Stop talking me, up, Buddy. I'm sure these men would like to hear the movie.

CHARLES: Oh! Where are my manners? I'll be quiet now. *(He is quiet for a moment)* A commercial! *(To Sprouse.)* What were we talking about?

SPROUSE: Your brother.

CHARLES: Wasn't there something else you were asking about?

*(Sprouse and Haring look confused for a moment, then Haring nods.)*

HARING: Missing person.

CHARLES: Missing person, yes! Rudy Stang. We know that name, don't we, Buddy?

BUDDY: Do we, Charles?

CHARLES: Yes. He was a reporter. He contacted me to do a story about my play on Broadway.

- BUDDY: I don't recall. Did you ever mention him to me?
- CHARLES: You know, I didn't, Buddy. It must have plumb slipped my mind. He was going to come by to do an interview.
- HARING: That's what his magazine told us. And?
- CHARLES: He didn't. Never showed. Didn't even call to cancel.
- HARING: Well, perhaps he had already gone missing.
- CHARLES: Well, that's the mystery, then, isn't it. Where did he go missing to?
- SPROUSE: Usually it's nothing, Mr. Bentley. People go missing all the time.
- CHARLES: Do they? How dreadful! What happens to them? Foul play?
- SPROUSE: Sometimes. Usually they've run off with some girl, or they are on a drunk somewhere, or they've just died in their car in the desert and nobody has found them yet.
- HARING: But we have to follow up the leads anyway. When was he supposed to interview you, Mr. Bentley?
- CHARLES: Last Tuesday at noon. I was quite put out that he didn't. I was looking forward to the interview.
- HARING: Did you call the magazine to find out what happened?
- CHARLES: No. I should have. It didn't occur to me. I figured he would call and reschedule. I suppose he can't do that if he's quietly decomposing in a car somewhere between here and Vegas, though.
- SPROUSE: Maybe he's on a drunk.
- CHARLES: If he's on a drunk, he doesn't have an excuse. Even drunk people can use the telephone. I call people all the time when I'm drunk.
- HARING: Well, I reckon that answers our question.
- CHARLES: You had questions about what I do when I'm drunk?

*(There is silence for a moment. Then Charles laughs.)*

- CHARLES: Forgive me. I was being deliberately obtuse for the sake of humor.

BUDDY: My brother kids around a lot.

CHARLES: Yeah, I'm a regular Catskills comedian.

HARING: (*Laughing politely.*) Oh, I get it now.

CHARLES: Oh, you're just humoring me. Let me tell you a proper joke.

HARING: Well, we ought to be getting back to duty ...

CHARLES: You must have time for one little joke. I promise it won't take more than a minute. Please. Humor me for just a few seconds more.

SPROUSE: Whaddya say, George? I wouldn't mind hearing a joke.

HARING: Well, sure. Go ahead.

CHARLES: All right. I heard this from a comic in Las Vegas, and it just killed them at the casinos. Here it is: What happened to the call girl who moved to Los Angeles?

SPROUSE: (*Grinning.*) What did happen to the call girl who moved to Los Angeles.

CHARLES: She got the tar beat out of her by a former child actor!

*(There is a long silence now. Buddy sets his hand on Charles's knee, staring at him. Charles looks at his brother, feigning innocence.)*

CHARLES: I must have told that one wrong. How did it go, Buddy?

BUDDY: I ain't never heard that joke, Charles.

CHARLES: Sure you did, Buddy! We heard it from Mo Sheffield! You remember! You laughed so hard you almost choked on a cocktail olive.

BUDDY: That joke ain't ringing no bells, Charles.

CHARLES: Well, shoot. It was a real knee slapper, officers, I can promise you that. I must have just told it wrong.

SPROUSE: Sure, sure.

CHARLES: Well, I'll call you boys if I remember the joke. You wouldn't mind that, would you?

HARING: Go ahead and call us, sure.

*(Haring and Sprouse rise to go. Charles mops his forehead with a handkerchief.)*

SPROUSE: Are you feeling all right, Mr. Bentley?

CHARLES: What? Why do you ask?

SPROUSE: You look a little peaked.

CHARLES: Oh, something going round, I imagine. I probably should sit for a spell. Buddy, will you be kind enough to see our guests out.

BUDDY: Yes. *(Buddy rises.)*

CHARLES: You see how he is. Buddy don't take on airs with nobody. He's a real friend to the working man. Hey, wasn't that your motto at Buddy's Bentleys? "The Working Man's Friend?"

BUDDY: No.

CHARLES: Something like that. "The working girl's friend?"

BUDDY: "The Best for Less."

CHARLES: Ho. I wasn't even close.

*(Buddy leads the police to the front door.)*

CHARLES: Have a good evening, gentlemen!

SPROUSE: Thanks for your hospitality.

CHARLES: Think nothing of it! I'm sure Buddy would agree that we would welcome your company any time we sit down to watch one of Buddy's old movies.

BUDDY: *(Awkwardly.)* Well, sure.

SPROUSE: Gee, that's awful nice.

HARING: I'm sure they don't mean it, Little George. They're just being polite.

CHARLES: Not at all! Drop by any time! Don't even feel you need to call ahead. Me and Buddy just love surprises. Ain't that true, Buddy.

BUDDY: Sure. Sure it's true. Drop by anytime.

HARING: Well, thank you for your time, Mr. Bentley.

BUDDY: I just wish we could have helped you more. Good luck finding that fellow. What

was his name?

CHARLES: Rudy Stang!

BUDDY: Rudy Stang. Yes. Call us if you find out anything.

*(The two officers prepare to exit.)*

CHARLES: Oh, wait! I'm sorry to bother you gentleman any more.

BUDDY: I'm sure they have to go, Charles.

CHARLES: Oh, I just have one question. It won't take but a second. You officers don't mind, do you?

HARING: No, sir. We have time for one more question.

CHARLES: It's silly, really, but it has just been eating me up with curiosity. I've always been curious about this?

HARING: Yes?

CHARLES: Do you police ever arrest any really big movie stars?

HARING: Arrest?

CHARLES: Sure. I mean, I've known a few movie stars in my day, and I know there's about an equal measure of good and bad in them, just like there is in anybody else.

HARING: Sure, that's right.

CHARLES: So you ever pick any up for anything big?

HARING: You mean, the police department?

CHARLES: No. You two. George and George. You ever arrest a big movie star for doing something really bad.

*(The officers look at Buddy, who shrugs and laughs.)*

BUDDY: My brother has always been the curious sort.

CHARLES: That's true. I'm always asking questions.

HARING: Well, I couldn't name names. These things usually get hushed up by the studios.

CHARLES: Oh! Now my curiosity is killing me!



HARING: Let's just say we once picked up a certain actor-slash-singer on a narcotics collar.

CHARLES: Did you really!

SPROUSE: Did we ever! We were just pulling him over for running a stop sign! It was quite a big deal!

HARING: Yeah. Usually vice gets that sort of arrest. We were celebrities in the department for a while, even if we couldn't really talk about it.

SPROUSE: On account of pressure from the studios.

HARING: Yeah.

CHARLES: That's the best story I've heard all night. Imagine! A big celebrity! It must have been quite the night for you gentlemen.

HARING: Yes it was.

CHARLES: Well, I hope you have another like it soon.

SPROUSE: *(Noticing the television set.)* Oh! You're missing your movie!

HARING: Well, we've taken up too much of your time as it is. *(To Buddy.)* Thank you again, Mr. Bentley.

BUDDY: Call me Buddy.

HARING: Buddy. *(Calling out to Charles.)* Thank you for your time, sir!

CHARLES: And you for yours!

*(The police exit. Buddy closes the door behind them. He remains still for a while, then straightens himself up and walks back to the sofa. He sits down in silence. Charles watches him.)*

CHARLES: Nothing to say, Buddy?

BUDDY: No.

CHARLES: You're not sore?

BUDDY: Sore? No.

CHARLES: You're not?

BUDDY: No.

CHARLES: Because, I don't know if you noticed, but I was putting an awful lot of heat on you back there.

BUDDY: I noticed.

CHARLES: I mean, I was really holding your toes to the fire.

BUDDY: Sure, sure. You got me good.

CHARLES: And you haven't got a thing to say about it?

BUDDY: Nope.

CHARLES: Well, you are still capable of surprising me, brother. I expect I won't be getting my pills for a while as a result of this.

BUDDY: No. We'll put you back on your pills. Just like before.

CHARLES: Well, that's awful generous of you, Buddy. Peculiarly generous. I was expecting a little more out of you.

BUDDY: Well, you're just going to have to be disappointed, Charles. I don't blame you for putting on the heat.

CHARLES: No?

BUDDY: I've pushed you pretty hard over the past few days, and there is only so hard a man can get pushed before he pushes back.

CHARLES: Yes?

BUDDY: I don't blame you. If I were in your shoes, I'd be putting the screw on me too. For a while back there, you really had me sweating. But you wasn't going to say nothing. You just wanted me to think you was.

CHARLES: That's true, Buddy.

BUDDY: We have an arrangement here. We've got a balance. It would be as bad for you as it would be for me if we lost that balance. Ain't that true?

CHARLES: That's true.

BUDDY: I mean, you've been in the institutions. You know what it would be like if you went back. You wouldn't like it, would you?

CHARLES: You know I wouldn't, Buddy.

BUDDY: As I see it, I pushed things a little out of balance with that photographer. Didn't I?

CHARLES: That's true, Buddy.

BUDDY: I lost control, and I shouldn't have. And it's not just because it would be bad for me. You know that I have to look out for you, don't I, Charles?

CHARLES: Yes.

BUDDY: You're sick, and I'm all you got. I'm never going to let anything bad happen to you again, Charles.

CHARLES: No?

BUDDY: No. You're my older brother, and you've always looked out after me, and I love you for it. But you're not well, and it's my turn to look after you.

CHARLES: So what's the plan?

BUDDY: We stay quiet, we lay low. This photographer thing will blow over. And then, in a little while, things will be back to the way they were. That's the plan. (*Buddy touches Charles' forehead, concerned.*) Jeez, you're hot. I'll go get you the pills.

*(Buddy rises, walks away.)*

CHARLES: Hey, Buddy.

BUDDY: (*Pauses.*) Yes.

CHARLES: You remember in Cuba, you remember what I got arrested for?

BUDDY: Those friends of yours, they taught you how to pick pockets, didn't they?

CHARLES: Yes they did. I spent most of my time during the shoot running around Cuba with them, grabbing wallets from tourists' pockets. It was a great lark. It was the last time I really remember being happy.

BUDDY: So?

CHARLES: So do you remember what I did that finally got me arrested?

BUDDY: Sure. You stole the gun right out of a policeman's pocket.

CHARLES: Yes I did. Still can, too.

*(Charles produces a policeman's gun. Buddy starts.)*

BUDDY: Charles ...

CHARLES: This arrangement, Buddy. This balance ... IT'S NOT ALL RIGHT WITH ME!

*(Charles turns the gun on himself and shoots into his own chest.)*

BUDDY: CHARLIE!

*(Charles crumples onto the floor. Buddy rushes to him, horrified.)*

BUDDY: What did you do, Charlie? WHAT DID YOU DO?

CHARLES: *(Weakly.)* This hurts bad, Buddy. It went right through me. BOOM.

BUDDY: Charles?

CHARLES: Was this what it was like on the beach? Did it hurt like this when you was shot? I didn't know it would hurt like this.

BUDDY: Oh, Charlie. Why did you do this?

CHARLES: Why do you think? Don't you know?

BUDDY: We was going to get things back to the way they was.

CHARLES: Buddy, I didn't like things the way they was. Don't you know that?

BUDDY: We was making it. I was looking after you.

CHARLES: You were looking after me? Buddy, you can't even look after yourself. You're crazy, Buddy. Don't you know it? You're crazy, and you're getting crazier.

BUDDY: *(Sobbing.)* Oh, Charlie. What am I supposed to do?

CHARLES: You don't do nothing, Buddy. Just wait. Those cops will be back when they realize one of their guns is gone, and they will take care of everything. You don't even need to tell them anything. They'll figure it out.

BUDDY: I got to call an ambulance.

CHARLES: *(Softly.)* Why? What good will it do?

BUDDY: I've got to ... if you die like this, Charlie, you'll go to hell. Don't you know that?

CHARLES: I'll go to hell. Yes. Yes, I believe that. Suicides go to hell. And I believe there is a hell.

BUDDY: Then *why??*

CHARLES: Hell would be better than what we got, Buddy. Hell would be better. *(He fades.)*

*(Buddy cradles him, sobbing. After a few moments, a knock comes at the front door.)*

HARING: Mr. Bentley? Mr. Bentley?

*END.*